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Survey to Assess Iowa State University Corn & Soybean Production Research and Extension Programs

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Survey to Assess Iowa State University Corn & Soybean Production Research and Extension Programs

Abstract

Iowa State University's College of Agriculture has been reviewing its research and extension programs and soliciting public comment on future priorities. In the fall of 2003, the College asked for statewide feedback in a review of the Iowa Agriculture and Home Economics Experiment Station — the College's research program that addresses immediate and long-term needs of Iowans. The College is using results of the review to guide budget decisions and allocations for future research. One critical priority that emerged from the review was the importance of keeping Iowa's farmers competitive and profitable, a theme that is reflected in the College's current strategic plan.

Because corn and soybeans are central to farmers' success in Iowa, the College is developing a new initiative to bring new focus to the needs of crop growers. Prior to the official start-up of the Corn and Soybean Initiative, the College surveyed corn and soybean growers and agribusiness professionals to better assess key research priorities and perceptions on information and education delivery.

Disciplines

Agribusiness | Agriculture | Agronomy and Crop Sciences

Comments

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SURVEY TO ASSESS
IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY

Corn & Soybean



Production Research and Extension Programs

INTRODUCTION

Iowa State University's College of Agriculture has been reviewing its research and extension programs and soliciting public comment on future priorities. In the fall of 2003, the College asked for statewide feedback in a review of the Iowa Agriculture and Home Economics Experiment Station — the College's research program that addresses immediate and long-term needs of Iowans. The College is using results of the review to guide budget decisions and allocations for future research. One critical priority that emerged from the review was the importance of keeping Iowa's farmers competitive and profitable, a theme that is reflected in the College's current strategic plan.

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HIGHLIGHTS OF THE SURVEY

The 2004 survey involved telephone interviews with 400 randomly selected corn and soybean growers and 100 certified crop advisers (CCAs). The grower interviews were dispersed to provide a balance among Iowa's nine crop reporting districts. The growers farmed an average of 1,579 acres of corn and soybeans in 2003. The CCAs are professionals working for a variety of agribusinesses. They include fertilizer/agricultural chemical dealers, cooperative employees, seed dealers, independent crop consultants, seed company representatives and farm managers.

The survey asked growers and certified crop advisers to provide sources they used for crop-production information, then followed up with questions to evaluate Iowa State University's performance.

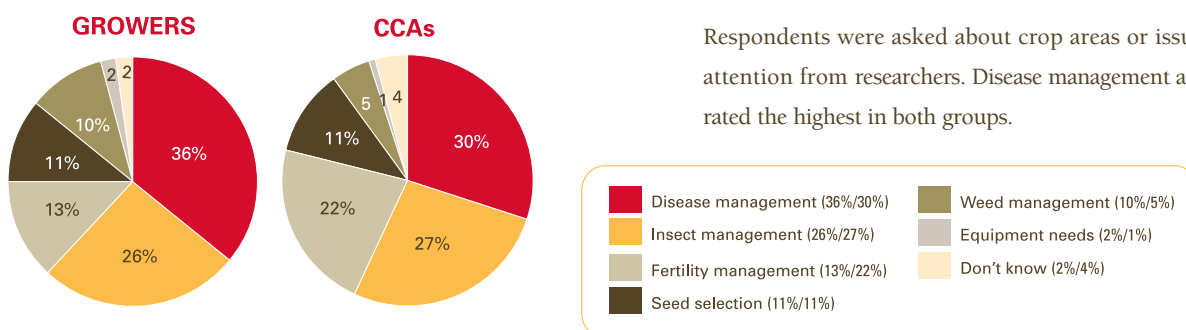
Two findings are particularly relevant to the development of ISU's new Corn and Soybean Initiative:

- Both growers and CCAs rely on multiple sources for information on corn and soybean production. For growers, the vast majority (more than 90 percent) identify private-sector crop advisers as a primary source of information . . .
- . . . while most of the crop advisers (more than 80 percent) identify Iowa State University as their primary source of information.

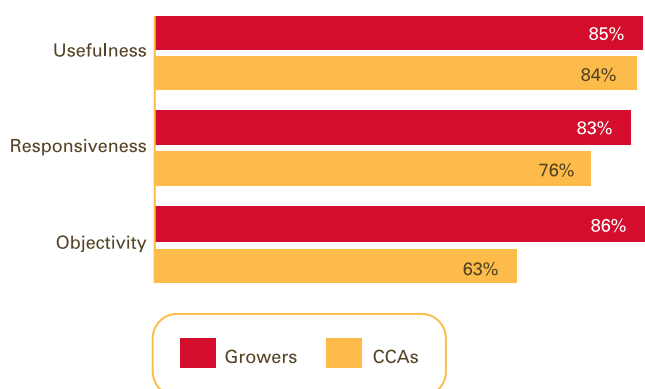
Overall, the survey results clearly reflect the emphasis Iowa State has placed for nearly two decades on "training the trainer" — taking advantage of existing partnerships with private agribusinesses to effectively deliver science-based production information to growers. This university-private sector partnership greatly multiplies the impact of ISU research and continues to successfully and effectively reach farmers with needed information and programs.

The new Corn and Soybean Initiative will work to improve on these results and enhance responsiveness to Iowa corn and soybean growers' needs, helping them achieve even higher productivity and competitiveness.

1. What corn and soybean issues need more research attention?

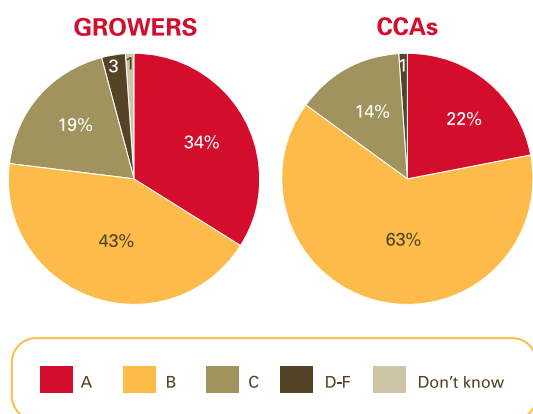


2. Is ISU moving in the right direction in aiding corn/soybean production?



Growers and CCAs were asked if they felt ISU was moving in the right direction in providing useful information, in being responsive to their needs and in being objective. In usefulness of information, 85 percent of growers and 84 percent of CCAs felt ISU was moving in the right direction. In responsiveness, 83 percent of growers and 76 percent of CCAs felt ISU was moving in the right direction. In objectivity, 86 percent of growers and 63 percent of CCAs felt ISU was moving in the right direction.

3. What overall grade would you give to ISU?



Respondents were asked to assign a grade to how well ISU was providing them with the information and support they needed to be successful in their corn and soybean operations or businesses. Of the growers, 77 percent assigned a grade of A or B. Of the CCAs, 85 percent assigned a grade of A or B. Those who did not assign an "A" were asked to suggest how ISU could improve its grade. For both groups, the most frequently mentioned comments were: be more responsive; change research focus; and be more up to date.

IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY

College of Agriculture and Life Sciences

Prepared by Greg Tylka, coordinator of the Corn and Soybean Initiative, professor of plant pathology and extension plant pathologist; Wendy Wintersteen, professor of entomology and senior associate dean of the College of Agriculture; and Brian Meyer, director of college relations, College of Agriculture.

SUMMARY

Results of the survey will help Iowa State University in its planning and development of a new Corn and Soybean Initiative. The initiative will be designed to improve responsiveness to growers' questions and concerns; provide a better research focus; enhance communications; and position Iowa State as a leading source for objective, science-based information to help corn and soybean growers thrive.